



論文

The Emergence of the ‘Chinese School’?: The ‘Sinicization’ of International Relations Theory in China¹

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Abstract

Western international relations theory (IRT) has held a dominant position since the discipline of international relations came into existence. However, the voices and perspectives that represent the experience of the non-Western world are essential to understanding today's pluralistic world. The purpose of this paper is to understand the development of non-Western IRT and the perspective of China as a rising superpower by examining the process of the ‘Westernization’ and ‘Sinicization’ of IRT in China since the 1980s.

The ‘Westernization’ process of IR study in China (re)started in the 1980s when China undertook a policy of reform and opening-up. Since then, most of Western IRT has been introduced into China, including American IRT, the English School, critical theory, and feminism. As a result, Marxism has been weakened and lost its dominant theoretical position, and Western IRT, especially American IRT, has become the mainstream.

However, in the mid-1980s, through learning Western IRT, a debate among some Chinese scholars arose in relation to the ‘Sinicization’ of IRT. In the first phase, the focal point was on ‘Chinese-style IRT’. Later, the debate evolved into new forms regarding ‘Chinese theories’ and a ‘Chinese School’. Since 2004, an understanding that ‘Chinese theories’ and a ‘Chinese School’ need to be constructed has become established among Chinese scholars. Among others, there are two representative arguments. One is put forward by Qin Yaqing, who considers China's rise as the core research question of ‘Chinese theory’; and the other is by Zhao Tingyang, who intends to provide a Chinese vision of a world order through reinterpreting the traditional Chinese world view, *tianxia* (天下).

Self-awareness as a superpower and the self-awakening of academic independence following the absorption of Western IRT among Chinese scholars are the motivating forces of the emerging ‘Chinese School’. Hence, the construction of ‘Chinese School(s)’ indicates that a rising China is seeking a new world order image, a new self-image and a new identity.

Keywords: non-Western IRT, the ‘Chinese School’ of IRT, Westernization, Sinicization

I. Introduction

“Knowledge is power” was coined by Francis Bacon in the 16th century. On the

contrary, power produces and diffuses knowledge. It has been known that Modern West, which has attained the superiority over military, economic, and political fields, has

generated and diffused the modern knowledge and maintained the hegemony of the knowledge.

Of course, as a part of the modern knowledge, Western international relations theory (IRT) has held a dominant position since the discipline of international relations (IR) came into existence. In his *The Twenty Year's Crisis 1919-1939*, one of the established classics of IR, E.H. Carr wrote the following (Carr, 2001, p. 74).

‘Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its view of life on the community. Theories of international morality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same process, the product of dominant nations or groups of nations. For the past hundred years, and more especially since 1918, the English-speaking peoples have formed the dominant group in the world; and current theories of international morality have been designed to perpetuate their supremacy and expressed in the idiom peculiar to them.’

Till date, theories of international morality and most IRT are the products of dominant nations or groups of nations, mainly from the West. Stanley Hoffmann’s statements that international relations is an ‘American social science’ may be a good explanation (Hoffmann, 1977, pp. 41-60). The dominant position of Western IRT in the discipline of IR comes from its dominant position of political and economic power in the world, forming the Western cultural hegemony.

Since the 1970s, the Eurocentrism of modern knowledge has been questioned strongly from within the Western world. *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987) by Martin Bernal, *Unthinking Social Science: the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (1991) by Immanuel Wallerstein, *ReOrient: The Global Economy in the Asian Age* (1998) by A.G. Frank, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power Paperback?* by Immanuel Wallerstein (2006) are the representative works. In Japan, the works to challenge the Eurocentric world view which had been looked as the universal standard also appeared. *China as a Method* (1989) by Yuozou Mizoguchi, *The International Moment of Modern China* (1990) by Takeshi Hamashita and *Japanese Civilization and Modern West* (1991) by Heita Kawakatsu are the influential works. Furthermore, in 1994 the presidents of Japan Association for Asian Studies which had strong influence in Japan, argued that ‘social sciences, which had its roots in modern western Europe and has been regarded as universalism, should be relativized again; and the construction of new theories is requested’ (Yamada and Watanabe, 1994, pp. i-ii).

At the same time, a small number of scholars, who began to take cognizance of the necessity and importance of the theories from non-western world, appeared from within the West. Hedley Bull, the core member of the English School of IRT, was the representative one. In his article ‘The Theory of International Politics 1919-1969’, he hurled the following questions (Bull, 1972, p. 55).

‘(And) why has theory of this sort flourished only in the West?And if the theories that are available are almost exclusively Western in origin and perspective, can they convey an adequate understanding of a world political system that is predominantly non-Western?’

At the beginning of the 21st century, in a very important critique of the Eurocentrism of IRT, *International System in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*, Buzan and Little indicated the diversity of ‘international system’ and emphasized that the voices and perspectives that represent the experience of non-Western world are necessary in order to understand today’s pluralistic world (Buzan and Little, 2000).

Indeed, we are currently witnessing an emerging trend of ‘non-’ or ‘post-’ Western IRT although the aims of these arguments are not always the same (Waeber, 1998, Smith, 2000; Crawford and Jarvis, 2001; Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, 2007; Shani, 2008, pp. 722-734; Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Ikeda, 2010)).³ Furthermore, some scholars identify IR as ‘a colonial household’ (Agathangelou and Ling, 2004), exposing ‘the discipline’ of IR to some of the most damaging effects. Not only is the English School of IRT attracting the attention of many scholars, the ‘nationalization’ of IRT has also become a hot topic (Callahan, 2004). In such a ‘post-western’ tendency of IRT, China has attracted a great deal of attention from the world as an emerging great power and a major non-West civilization. China not only has been developing its material power, it also has been eager to enhance its soft power by becoming a knowledge producer and re-imaging the world

(Callahan and Barabantseva, 2011). Since the 1990s, most Chinese scholars try to redefine China and the world including so-called ‘New Lift’ (Jiang, 2003; Wang H., 2004; Gan, 2007; Han, 2009; Wang, 2004; Pan, 2010; Zhang, 2012).

IR study in China has undergone a complete change since the 1980s.⁴ The crucial feature of IR study in China in the first two decades is ‘westernization’, namely introducing western IRT. Chinese views of ‘national interests’, ‘sovereignty’, and ‘security’ have changed or are changing under the strong influence of Western IRT (Wang, 2007). Furthermore, the introduction of the theories of regionalism and global governance has been providing China with the understanding of them. However the third decade the trend of ‘sinicization’ of IRT in China has developed rapidly: constructing ‘Chinese theory’ and a ‘Chinese school’ of IRT was regarded not only necessary but also inevitable; and Chinese traditional thoughts and the historical experiences have become hot subjects as important resources for sinicization (Qin, 2006, 2007).

The purpose of this paper is to understand the development of non-Western IRT by examining the process of the ‘sinicization’ (= indigenization) of IRT in China since the 1980s. This paper examines the following three problems:- (1) How did constructing ‘Chinese theory’ and a ‘Chinese school’ of IRT become the mainstream in Chinese IR community? (2) What kind of approaches has been taken? (3) How does the ‘sinicization’ of IRT reflect the self-image, the world views and the idea of world order in the process of shaping China as a rising great power?

II. The Debates on the ‘sinicization’ of IRT

From the mid-1980s, in the process of learning Western IRT, a series of debates among Chinese scholars appeared on the ‘sinicization’ of IRT. The main debate started in the 1980s and ended in the early 2000s, lasting for two decades. The subjects of the debates have changed from ‘IRT with Chinese characteristics’ to ‘Chinese view’, ‘China’s perspective’, ‘Chinese theory’, and a ‘Chinese school’. In 2004, the argument that China should construct a ‘Chinese school of IRT’ became the mainstream argument in the Chinese IR community.

This paper outlines the debates which lasted two decades and confirms that Chinese scholars’ self-awakening of academic independence following the absorption of Western IRT, which is one important motivating force of the emerging ‘Chinese school’.

1. The Debate on ‘IRT with Chinese Characteristics’

In the mid-1980s, in response to the concept of ‘socialism theory with Chinese characteristics’ termed by Deng Xiaoping, some senior scholars who took the position of Marxism, argued that Chinese scholars should construct the ‘IRT with Chinese characteristics’. ⁵ This initiated the debate on ‘an IRT with Chinese characteristics’.

Although ‘an IRT with Chinese characteristics’ was one of the main subjects, generally in the 1980s, there didn’t exist a true debate during the Shanghai conference in 1987. At that time, most scholars were aware of the difference between ‘a general theory’ and ‘a practice- or policy-oriented theory’, and argued that in academic research what China needed was the former (which should be universal and

generally acknowledged in most contexts), not the latter (Yuan, 1992, pp. 17-18). Serving policymaking should not be the end but only one of the results of academic research. In the early days of the reform period, it was the main task for most Chinese scholars to learn Western IRT. So the following opinion is representative. In order to construct Chinese theoretical frameworks of IR, Chinese scholars must learn from Western theoretical achievements (Ni, Feng, and Jin, 1989, 181-184). For most Chinese scholars, especially the younger ones, the proposition to construct ‘an IRT with Chinese characteristics’ was a statement with strong ideological affiliations.

But in the early 1990s, the de-ideologization of ‘Chinese characteristics’ promoted by some scholars expanded the debate. Liang Shoude, professor of Peking University, a strong supporter of ‘IRT with Chinese characteristics’, argued the correctness of ‘Chinese characteristics’ from a philosophical point of view. Liang argued that as theory is a unity of generality and particularity, the proposition of ‘Chinese characteristics’ which was based on the rule of theory itself had its legitimacy and inevitability. Liang defined ‘Chinese characteristics’ as an IRT study which was based on the conditions and national interests of China, and proposed that international politics always develops around rights. Chinese scholars should take ‘politics of rights’ as Chinese perspective of IR study (Liang, 1994, pp. 15-21, 1997, pp. 1-9, 2005, pp. 5-7). Ni Shixiong, professor of Fudan University, also argued that any IRT had its inherent stance and perspective, emphasizing ‘Chinese characteristics’ did not mean the outstanding significance of the narrow nationalism or the ideology (Ni, 2001, pp. 505).

On the other hand, the scholars who opposed or doubted the proposition of ‘Chinese

characteristics' claimed that the purpose of the academic theory was to interpret or explain problems, 'characteristics' is not necessary, and 'characteristics' cannot be designed in advance. Emphasizing 'Chinese characteristics' will make the practicality stand out and weaken the academicism. The opinions of Zi Zhongjun, a professor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, is representative. Though Zi recognized that social-cultural products researchers are influenced by their nations, the histories of their states, social cultures, and the ways of the thinking, she still opposed the theory for practical use. She argued her stance that the theorist's vocation is do his/her best to make his/her theory agree with the objective rules, and Chinese scholars should join in the theory debates in the world stage with Chinese excellent views (Zi, 1998, pp. 38-41).

It must be pointed out there was a noteworthy fact that accelerate the debates' development. That's the tasks of the development of international relations as a discipline and the 'sinicization' of the IRTs that should be taught at university had been recognized widely among Chinese IR scholars. This is a very important reason that most scholars joined in the debates on 'Chinese characteristics'.

The debate further evolved into a new phase regarding 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school'. The reason was the 'third road', which argued 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school', had become the mainstream.

2. The Debate Regarding 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school'

A new concept for the alternative of 'Chinese characteristics' was proposed in 1993. Wang Yizhou argued that as the IRT study in China is objectively still in a (low) stage

borrowing the theories, methods of analysis and paradigms from the West, 'Chinese viewpoint' is more suitable expression than 'Chinese characteristics'. Furthermore, he argued that Chinese scholars should shape a 'Chinese school' through the accumulation of the studies of concrete problems (Wang, 1993, p. 6).

According to Wang Yizhou, the cultural backgrounds, historic traditions, and national characters are different, the languages, terms, and ways of thinking are also different. We can say theories differ in nation/country. In this sense, 'European continent school', 'American school', 'Japanese school', 'Russian school', 'Chinese school', and the like are possible (Wang, 1998c, pp. 17-26). The expressions of 'China's viewpoint' and a 'Chinese school' emphasized the nation's history, culture and context rather than the national interests. Such expressions seem to give careful consideration to the objectivity of academic research as well as the theory's individuality and its attribute of nation/country. The proponents of a 'Chinese school' do not negate the general ideas of Western IRT, but to enrich the existing frameworks and add a new perspective to general IRT (Ren, 2009).

As an alternative of the 'Chinese characteristics', a 'Chinese school' gained strong support among Chinese IR scholars. However, a small number of schools opposed the argument of a 'Chinese school'. Zhang Ruizhuang, professor of Nankai University, insisted that what the Chinese IR community most needed is the spread of scientific research methods, namely positivism (Zhang, 2004, pp. 22-23). From the same stance, Yan Xuetong, professor of Tsinghua University, argued that theory is universal and has no nationality (Yan, 2006, p.1).

It seems that a confrontation between two

views on the theory exists among Chinese scholars. One is humanist view, which looked at theory as a hypothesis or a system of ideas based on interpretation and understanding. He argued that theory is pregnant with a relative nature, the bases of philosophy, history and culture. The other is scientism view, which emphasizes on the importance of scientific research methods that demonstrate the objectivity of theory and the relation of cause and effect. Notwithstanding, at the beginning of the 21st century, the debates on 'Chinese characteristics' cooled down, and more and more Chinese scholars are for the argument of a 'Chinese school' of IRT.

3. Toward a consensus of a 'Chinese school'

In 2004, the Third Pan-Chinese IRT Conference 'Construct Chinese IRT, Establish a Chinese School of IRT' was held. This symbolic conference recognized that the construction of 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school' was necessary and it had become consensus among the Chinese IR community.

However, the voices opposing or worrying the 'Chinese school' of IRT still exist. Zhang Ruizhuang and Yan Xuetong took on the realism approach and argued the universality of theory. A small number of scholars state that considering a possibility of a 'Chinese school' as an inevitability of one reflects Chinese scholars' self-centered understanding. And Lu peng worried that the common recognition on a 'Chinese school' in Chinese IR community would make the Chinese IRT isolated and the IRT be split more than ever (Lu, 2010, pp. 101-118).

Since 2004, in order to construct the 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school', many Chinese scholars began to seek for appropriate approaches. Qin Yaqing, Guo Shuyong, Ren Xiao,

Yu Zhengliang, Wang Zhengyi, Zhang Zhizhou, Shi bin, Wang Yiwei are the representative scholars.

Why did constructing a 'Chinese school' of IRT become into the consensus of the Chinese IR community? Why did a number of Chinese scholars, including Wang Yizhou, change their stance and turn to supporting the 'Chinese theories' and a 'Chinese school'?

These questions could be understood from five aspects. Firstly, learning Western IRT had brought academic awareness— 'the awareness of IRT as a knowledge-oriented construct rather than a mere instrument for policy interpretation' (Qin, 2007, p. 321)— to Chinese scholars, and such a change of awareness played a role as an incitement to the argument of a 'Chinese school'. As Qin Yaqing pointed out that Chinese scholars had a deeper understanding of the theory studies, they were beginning to acknowledge that 'school of thought' is a driving force for IRT development (Qin, 2007, p. 321).

Secondly, through the debates since the 1980s in Chinese IR community, not only the awareness to obey the academic rules has been spread, the understanding of the generality and particularity of IRT had been owned jointly among Chinese scholars. Most Chinese scholars considered that 'personality attribute', 'times attribute', and 'nationality attribute', which determine the IRT, had the aspects that do not serve national interests. In this way, the universal theory is possible. At the same time, there is some relevance between IRT and national interests (Wang and Dan, 2008, p. 350).

Thirdly, most Chinese scholars recognized that Chinese IRT study had an inclination for American IRT, and this has strengthened their awareness to oppose American theories'

hegemony since the end of 20th century. Wang Jisi, professor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, raised the alarm earlier that 'the Western theory models had become into dogma among younger Chinese scholars' (Wang, 1998, p. 307). At the same time another famous scholar, Wang Yizhou began to rethink the problem of the 'Americanization' and 'America-centrism' in Chinese IR discipline, and recognized that it was necessary to construct 'Chinese theory' and a 'Chinese school' (Wang, 1998a, pp. 57-58). Furthermore, some scholars criticized strictly that 'Chinese IRT community has become a race track and a colony of American and European countries' IRT' (Zhang, 2005, p. 183; Wang, 2009; Ren, 2009).

This meant that Chinese scholars had increased their self-awakening of academic independence. Wang Zhengyi felt that the structure of world system of knowledge consists of the 'core/producers' and the 'periphery/consumers'. For Wang Zhengyi, constructing a 'Chinese school' of IRT means China turning from a consumer of knowledge to a producer of it (Wang, 2006, p. 1; Tang, 2008, pp. 14-15).

Fourthly, China's rise and Chinese government's needs. There is a consensus that as a rising great power, China needs its own theory. 'IRTs are always the theories by great powers' (Wang, 1998b, p. 4). The words of Wang Yizhou is showing the self-awareness as a superpower of Chinese scholars these days. In a conference held in 2003, Wang Yi, the Vice-Minister of foreign affairs, called on Chinese IR scholars to construct China's own IRT and a body of theories. Wang Yi recommended that the present developed countries concentrate their efforts to construct the IRT which serve their national interests. 'It is

obvious that China, as a great power maintaining socialism direction, needs its own IRT and a body of theories. "This is a need of foreign affairs, but also a natural duty of Chinese scholars of IR" (Wang, 2003, p. 5). Thereafter, Chinese scholars from the representative think-tanks and universities had a lively discussion about the urgent subject of 'China's peaceful rise'.⁶

Lastly, non-mainstream theories of IR, especially the critical theory and the English School have influenced Chinese scholars' orientation towards the de-America-centrism IRT strongly. If the critical theory provides the legality theory for the construction of a 'Chinese school', then the English School provides a good model for the construction of a 'Chinese school'. As mentioned below, a boom of 'learning from the English School' has accrued from round 2000 in Chinese IR community.

Therefore, it is obvious that the motivating forces seeking 'Chinese theory' and a 'China school' instead of 'IRT with Chinese characteristics' are the self-awakening of academic independence and self-awareness as a superpower of Chinese scholars. Supported by the two motivating forces, Chinese scholars are searching for the perspectives, which reflect the history, culture, and the position in international society of non-West region.

III. The approaches to a 'Chinese school'

This paper will discuss the approaches the Chinese scholars are taking to search for 'Chinese theory' and a 'China school' through examining the fruits of the third IRT Studies Conference, a literature titled *'International Relations: Calling to Construct Chinese Theory'* (Guo, 2005), and the recent arguments.

The first approach is absorbing the theories and research methods of the West, and applying them to concrete examples. This approach emphasizes that constructing a 'China school' must be based on the scientific methods, namely 'positivism' (Wang, 1994, pp. 34-39; Yan, 2004, p. 17). The scholars who take this approach intend to seek for improvements and innovations of the theories through applying and verifying the Western theories, including realism, neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism. Recent repetitive work is considering the tributary system from the standpoint of a game-theoretic equilibrium (Zhou, 2011, pp. 147-178).

The second approach is based on the orthodox school of Marxism theory. This approach emphasizes the limitation of the scientific methods, namely 'positivism', especially the West-centrism ideology that hides behind 'positivism' (Li, 2004, pp. 19-24), and insists that the classics of Marxism-Leninism theories and the international thoughts and diplomatic thoughts of China's leaders are the foundations and sources of 'Chinese theory' (Fu, 2005, pp. 58-69; Zhang, 1998, pp. 37-41; Yang, 2003, pp. 33-34). In addition, this approach argues that in order to make the people consent to socialism being the best choice to construct a fair and peaceful world, the study should give priority to the study of international ethics and ethics of world justice (Li, 2005, pp. 37-44).

The third approach is theorizing the Chinese traditional political-cultural thoughts. In this approach, China's history, the characteristic traditional culture, political thoughts, thoughts of international relations are regarded as resources to construct 'Chinese theory' and a 'Chinese school'. The studies of this approach have been increasing rapidly since the end of the last century, including

wide range of subjects, for example, international order (normative theory), strategic culture, soft power, and etc. (Yu, 1996, pp. 73-76; Men, 2005, pp. 308-318; Wang, 2010).

Recognizing the negative aspects of modernization in the world, and gaining self-confidence with a high level of economic growth, China began to argue its non-West self-identification, the legitimacy of Chinese civilization, and Chinese independence of mind. Recently Chinese traditional culture, which had been criticized since the end of nineteenth century, has been reevaluating and reconstructing (Jiang, 2003). In this approach, the outstanding studies are the normative theories studies on world order. The concepts/thoughts with Chinese characteristic, for example, 'Tianxia (天下, All-Under-Heaven)', 'Hexie (和諧, Harmonious)', 'Hehe (和合, Harmony)', played the central role (Zhang, 2001; Xia, 2007, pp. 3-12; Wang, 2011).

The fourth approach is theorizing China's diplomacy including both practices and thoughts. In this approach, the diplomacy and diplomatic thought of ancient China are very hot subjects. Many scholars were engaged in the study of the diplomacy and diplomatic thought of the Spring and Autumn period (770 B.C.~221 B.C.). For example, Ye Zicheng, professor of Peking University, since 2001, Yan Xuetong and his colleagues, since 2009, have discussed the subjects (Ye and Pang, 2001, pp. 24-29; Ye, 2003; Ye and Wang, 2006, pp. 113-132; Yan and Xu, 2008, 2009; Yan, 2011). Some new concepts and discourses have surfaced from the abundant resources of ancient China and East Asian historical experiences, including the tribute system. It seems that there is a potential for shaping new IRT in the future.

Indeed, some results are evident. For

example, Hui (2005) formed a new theory named 'A Dynamic Theory of World Politics', through making a comparative study of war and the formation of state in two international systems-ancient China and early modern Europe. As a result of wars, Ancient China from a split state of Spring and Autumn period became a unified empire (Qin dynasty), but Europe had maintained the split interstates system from the Middle Ages to the modern period.

Furthermore, this approach regards the history of diplomacy and diplomatic thought of China since modern period. It serves as very rich sources for forming China's own theories. Nowadays, for this approach, explaining China's peaceful rise is an important subject (Zhao and Ni, 2005, 273-275; Ren, 2005, pp. 290-307). Alastair Iain Johnston, professor of Harvard University, pointed out that linking IRT and the study of Chinese foreign policy could contribute to IRT (Johnston, 2006, pp. 64-73).

The fifth approach is referring to the English School. English School as a good model had been drawing Chinese scholars' attention.⁷ They analyzed the feature of the English School and the difference between the English and the American IRT. The following are considered in retrospect what that the Chinese scholars could learn from the English School.

Firstly, the theoretical perspective of its own way. Secondly, the establishment of problem that constitutes the core of the theory. Thirdly, the study of the histories of ontology and methodology. Fourthly, the ethical thinking on IR. Lastly, to establish an awareness of the issues in relation to the rising 'China of today' the English School could give Chinese scholars food for thought (Shi, 2005, pp. 9-16, 2004, pp. 1-24; Zhou, 2005, pp. 133-143).

The last approach is taking the practices of contemporary international relations and international society as objects of study. This approach looks at globalization as global social changes that have never experienced until now, and considers that there is a chance for hatching IRT with Chinese characteristics through examining the changing society (Cai, 2005, pp. 200-211; Yu, 2005, p. 1). The arguments of this approach include world order, global governance, concepts on the standard of value, international understanding, global political sociology, and etc (Yu and Chen, 2005, pp. 3-22).

As discussed above, there are free and lively discussions about constructing a 'Chinese school' from various approaches in Chinese IR community. We recognize that the construction of a 'Chinese school' is still at the initial stage. In comparison with the English School, which has distinctive features, namely the concept of international society and the defense of a classical approach, we may say there is no direction of a 'Chinese school'. Even though the English School has been developed and inherited by very few members and within narrow limits, there are still some disagreements within the School over the feature of the School, the theories and the approaches of the core members of the School (Suganami, 2003). In comparison with the English School, it is no little wonder that a 'Chinese school', which consists of so wide sphere and members, involves various perspectives, resources and approaches within itself. If anything, there is some possibility of that a developing 'Chinese school' consists of plural school.

It is China's rise that is supporting the arguments of a 'Chinese school', so we consider

that there is a huge possibility of constructing a 'Chinese school' based on Chinese identity/perspectives/resources. So the third and fourth approaches, which emphasize Chinese identity/ resources, have potential to become the main direction of a 'Chinese school'. That is because the two approaches not only complementary to each other, they also absorb/apply the Western theories/research methods and the English School's approaches.

Among others, there are two representative arguments. One is put forward by Qin Yaqing, who considers China's rise as the core research question of 'Chinese theory'; and the other is by Zhao Tingyang, who intends to provide a Chinese vision of a world order through reinterpreting the traditional Chinese world view Tianxia(天下 /All-Under Heaven). In addition, Yan Xuetong's arguments, which is widely noticed, in some extent promoted a debate on a 'Chinese school'.

This three arguments are discussed in next section.

IV. The representative arguments of constructing a 'Chinese school'

1. An advocate of a 'Chinese school'——Qin Yaqing

Qin Yaqing, who has pondered the possibility of a distinct Chinese school of international relations theory since 2004, is a representative advocate of a 'Chinese school'. 'It is possible and even inevitable that a Chinese school of IRT will emerge' (Qin, 2006, pp. 7-13). According to Qin, the awareness of the issues has different perspectives, and is basically constructed by the actors 'through a particular cultural and historical lens and conceived through a particular representational system' (Qin, 2007, 328).

Attaching great importance to constructivism, Qin emphasized the metaphysical component. Qin wrote, 'this metaphysical component decides the identity of a theory, distinguishing one theory from another. Because of it, any social theory is ethnocentric in nature and in the beginning' (Qin, 2007, p. 329). On the other hand, for Qin, while it was essential and inevitable that a social theory has to be based on its indigenous culture, it can transcend its original awareness of the issue and have universal meaning.

Then how do Chinese intellectuals construct Chinese theory and a Chinese school? Qin argued that a theory must have a distinct problematic that develops into a hard core to make the theory alive and alone. Because one of important factors indicating that there is no Chinese IRT is the absence of a theoretical hard core, the construction of a Chinese school should begin with defining its own core problematic (Qin, 2005). Qin asserted that 'the relationship between China and international society' can be the core problematic of a Chinese school of IRT (Qin, 2005, p. 175).

'The relationship between China and international society, as a fundamental problem of identity, is not only a century puzzle in the 140 years from 1840 to 1980, but also the problem the rising China are facing at present (Qin, 2007, p. 334).' Then Qin linked the core problematic with China's peaceful rise; and brought up a research program, theorizing the peaceful process that China as a rising world socialism great power, is socialized within international society. Concerning this program, Qin presented a research plan including the following three subjects: (1) the structure and process of international system, (2) the structure and process of the domestic society, and (3) the formation of

the collective identity (Qin, 2005, p. 176).

Qin pointed out three potential sources for a Chinese school of IRT, each being a pair of thought and practice: (1) 'the 'Tianxia' worldview and the Tributary System; (2) modernization philosophy and the Chinese revolutions; and (3) reformist thinking and the integration into the international system' (Qin, 2006, pp. 9-12). 'How to get inspiration from the three sources of the thinking and practice and how to draw nutrition from the Western IR and social thoughts – these are questions to which answers should be provided if a Chinese school is to emerge in the era of globalization.' (Qin, 2007, pp. 334-335)

Qin not only explained the change of China's identity through a constructivist approach (Qin, 2003) but also intended to introduce Chinese traditional thoughts into the present IRT (Qin, 2009). Qin attempted to develop 'process-oriented constructivism', which criticized the Western way of thinking of international society as an 'entity-oriented approach' and emphasized the importance of the core element of Chinese traditional thought: 'Guanxi (關係/Relationality)'.

According to Qin, the understanding of international society in the West (e.g. the English School approach) is a Western ego-category; here, the non-Western should be homogenized into the Western one. With such understanding of international society, which is called 'entity-oriented approach' by Qin, it is based upon the Western way of thinking, especially taxonomical thinking and conflictual dialectics. Qin also argued that the 'entity approach' neglects one important social element: social interaction and social relations to which are closely related. 'Relation is the basic feature of international society even human society', 'no power,

institution, rule, and culture can exist out of relation' (Qin, 2010, pp. 132-137).

According to Qin, his 'process approach', which is based upon the Chinese dialectics and Chinese understanding of human society, takes international society as a process—a process of complicated inter-subjective relations in motion. The most important feature of the approach of 'process-oriented constructivism' is a relational thinking, which forms the core element of the Chinese way of thinking. In the Chinese way of thinking, 'society is not a self-enclosed, self-contained entity. Rather, it is a process, an open process of complex social relations in motion. Rules, regimes, and institutions are not established to govern or restrain the behavior of individual actors in society, but to harmonize relations among members of society. This understanding of society is based upon the relational thought process and the complementary dialectic, both of which originate in the Chinese philosophical and intellectual traditions' (Qin, 2010, p. 138).

'In the logic of relational thinking, international society, as any society, is a process rather than an entity, a process of complex, entangled, and on-going relations. It is a becoming rather than a being, a becoming that involves agents and institutions. If society is seen as a complexity of relations, actors in such a society are actors-in-process or actors-in-relations. In the logic of complementary dialectics, opposites of a pairing interact in a non-conflicting way, leading to a new synthesis that combines rather than homogenizes'. (Qin, 2010, p. 141)

'Identity is thus defined and redefined in terms of such relations, experiencing constant changes through social practices, and therefore

shows multiple and plural characteristic features. Identity, like society, is a becoming rather than a being.’ (Qin, 2010, p. 143)

For Qin, due to taxonomical thinking, the dualist Western logic, characterized by individual-centered way of thinking, is exclusive and conflictual. On the other hand, the Chinese logic is inclusive and non-conflictual. In the Chinese logic, which is called ‘both-and logic’ by Qin, the nature and form of the self depends on its relations with the other.

According to the Chinese way of thinking, Qin asserted that China’s continued peaceful rise is possible. And it will depend not only on China but also on the interaction between China and other members of international society, especially the United States.

2. Idealistic world society: Zhao Tingyang’s Tianxia system

Zhao Tingyang, professor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), argued that the Chinese theory of ‘Tianxia’ (All-Under-Heaven) is the best philosophy for world governance, is attracting a great deal of attention (Zhao, 2005).

The most important political problem today, according to Zhao, is not the so-called “failed states” but the “failed world,” a disordered world of chaos. The real origin of the problem is the ‘failed world view’, namely the framework of ‘nation-state-internationalness’, which is based on Western historical experiences and political philosophy. Because of the framework of ‘nation-state-internationalness’, a quest for the interest of unit (nation-state), namely national interests, is seen as an absolute priority, and ‘the world’ is a mere scrambled space for existence.

‘The world’, as a political unit, has never existed (Zhao, 2005, p. 18, 21, 37,111).

For Zhao, the underlying cause of such a way of thinking- ‘one without world awareness’, stems from crucial defects of modern western political philosophy: ‘enemy awareness’, ‘confrontation awareness’, and ‘exclusion awareness’. In addition, both the Hobbesian culture (which makes enemies) and the Lockean culture (which makes rivals), and even Kant’s thought (which insists ‘a permanent peace’) limit international law/international community membership to ‘civilization states/constitutional states’ by not only excluding other communities, but also regarding others who do not join the union as latent enemies (Zhao, 2005, pp. 24-25). Japanese scholar Oshimura also wrote, ‘it is ego and alienated others that lie at the root of western thoughts (including Kant’s thought), and there exists definitely not a cosmopolitan world encompassing others, but a divided world (Oshimura, 2010, p. 92)’. Zhao argued that modern Western political philosophy is ‘a philosophy on the world’, serving national interests, but not ‘a philosophy for the world’, standing for universal interests. Zhao concluded that because ‘a philosophy on the world’ and world views based on them are ignorant or indifferent to the world itself, they lack the legitimacy of knowledge and ethics, which means they are not able to solve world-wide problems (Zhao, 2005, p. 122).

Then Zhao presented his ‘Tianxia’ system as a ‘philosophy for the world’, which was based on ancient Chinese political philosophy. Zhao called his ‘Tianxia system’ theory ‘the fourth type culture’ (this phrase means ‘transforming enemies into friends), which does not exist in Western culture.

Zhao argued that 'Tianxia system' would be the basis of theory which leads to a complete political world, a world without exclusion. According to Zhao, the all-inclusive Tianxia system included all the world: geographical world ('the earth'), psychological world ('general will of the people'), and political world ('a world institution'), and unacceptable others, enemies and heathens do not exist (Zhao, 2005, pp. 123-126). Zhao emphasized that the originality of Tianxia system theory lies in "wuwai (无外)" (no outside others, namely all-inclusive), according to which the whole world belongs inside, and an 'outside' resistant to harmonization will be dissolved.

In the Tianxia system theory, not the state, but Tianxia=world-ness is the most basic political concept and political principle. In a word, Tianxia is presented as a legitimate world order view. So, with the recognition framework of 'state-internationality-world-ness', the 'Tianxia' system, as a 'world-ness theory' that constructs a way of understanding politics based on cosmopolitanism (not nationalism), and as a complete political theory/legitimate world view, will contribute to the solution of globalized world issues.

Zhao wrote, 'internationality is not and cannot be world-ness. The problem of world institution has now become more and more urgent since the world has plunged into globalization' (Zhao, 2006, p. 38). Zhao's aim is to construct a new world view which must surpass the state-centric international world view. Furthermore, he reinterpreted 'Tianxia' to make 'world-ness' a political unit—the biggest unit. Paying attention to the positive aspects of Chinese thought, Zhao tried to construct an all-inclusive Tianxia system as a legitimate world view to

solve the world's problems in the global age. But in his book, he did not prepare a plan to design a world institution based on the Tianxia system theory.

Although Zhao argued that Tianxia theory is a more appropriate 'world theory' than the existing 'international theory' in dealing with global issues, his main motivation is to construct Chinese discourse based on Chinese concepts and knowledge by relativizing the western discourse which has a hold on the dominant position in the world. But William A. Callahan argued that because the motivation of Zhao's Tianxia theory is to increase China's normative power/soft power, Chinese vision of world order means a new hegemony rather than a Post-Hegemonic world view (William A. Callahan, 2008, pp. 749-61).

In addition, the works of Yan Xuetong and his colleagues were considered as having promote the trend of traditionlization of IR studies in China, and having laid the foundations for constructing a Chinese school of IRT (Wang, 2010, p. 149). Yan Xuetong and his colleagues had interpreted ancient Chinese thought and tried to introduce them into mainstream international relations theory. Their works analyzed the classical texts of Chinese political philosophers, including Guanzi, Laozi, Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Xunzi, Hanfeizi and many other important texts from pre-Qin period (Yan and Xu, 2008, 2009; Yan, 2011a). But Yan's purpose was not to construct a Chinese school, it was to 'learn from the experiences of ancient China and its political philosophers in order to enrich and improve current understandings of international politics'. Yan made a case against the 'necessity' of a 'Chinese school' and put forward his idea that ancient Chinese thoughts (like pre-Qin era norms)

are universalizable when Chinese scholars use a scientific theory to formulate them. (Yan, p. 202).

Yan's works had been widely noticed. *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (2011) had already drawn attention from public intellectuals and scholars in the West (Cunningham-Cross and Callahan, 2011; Paltiel, 2011). In his book, Yan discussed two types of world leadership: the 'humane authority' (wang/王) and the 'hegemonic authority' (ba/霸). Yan wrote, '[t]he root difference between humane authority and hegemonic authority is that the former relies on morality and the latter on material power to uphold interstate order.' (Yan, 2011a, p. 49) Yan argued that 'humane authority' (wang/王), which is grounded on morality and respect, is true kingship. To attain true kingship, one should not rely exclusively on military force; instead, true kingship, one relies on the political power that emerges from a state's morality. Yan further argued that China should create a new kind of world leadership by pursuing political power, rather than economic and/or military power. To realize such a goal, China should advocate the values of fairness and justice, and as universal values, these values should take precedence over freedom, equality, and democracy (Yan, 2011b).

For Yan, if China chooses the Wang approach, China's rise can be of benefit to the stability of international order and the progress of international norms' (Yan, 2011a, p. 204). H.A. Kissinger also claimed that not just any ideologies but Chinese traditional thought will become the mainstream of China's foreign policy (Kissinger, 2012). It seems that the sinicization of Chinese international political thought will continue.

V. Conclusion

This paper has traced the debates on 'international relations theory with Chinese characteristics'/a 'Chinese school' among Chinese scholars since the 1980s. The paper also discussed five factors that promoted the development of 'sinicization' of IRT in China. The motivating forces for seeking 'Chinese theory' and a 'China school' are the self-awakening of academic independence and self-awareness as a superpower of Chinese scholars are also discussed.

The paper discussed the approaches that have been taken by Chinese scholars to construct a 'Chinese school'. To build 'Chinese theory' and a 'China school', Chinese scholars had been taking various approaches, including theorizing Chinese traditional political-cultural thoughts and theorizing China's diplomacy in practices and thoughts. If the argument of Ole Wæver (1998, p. 696) that '[t]he most obvious candidate for an independent IR tradition based on a unique philosophical tradition is China' is right, the approach of theorizing Chinese traditional political-cultural thoughts would be a potential field.

Indeed, the arguments of Qin and Zhao, which the paper gave highlights to as typical arguments, were founded on unique Chinese philosophical traditions. Qin, who considered China's rise as the core research question of 'Chinese Theory', and tried to introduce 'Guanxi', the core concept of Chinese traditional thought into mainstream IRT, while Zhao intended to reinterpret the traditional Chinese world view 'Tianxia' as a Chinese vision of world order.

From the above, it is evident that the knowledge of international politics in China has

changed since the 1980s—firstly, the rapid ‘westernization’ of IR studies (especially the introduction of mainstream Western IRT), and this led to the decline of orthodox Marxism, and then at the same time, the process of sinicization of IRT has developed, especially in the reinterpretation/reconstruction of Chinese traditional thoughts.

However, from a detached point of view, a ‘Chinese school’ of IRT is still in the bud. It is important that as a result of introduction of American IRT, critical theory and the English School of IRT, Chinese scholars has strengthened their awareness of being a producer of knowledge. As the phase of introduction of IRT is over, the next phase of constructing IRT has become a new issue. In order to relativize Western IRT, Chinese scholars have paid attention to the development of IRT in Britain, Russia, Germany, France, and India, and postmodern theory (Xiong, 2009, pp. 52-58; Yan and Chen, 2009, pp. 59-65). Furthermore, Chinese scholars are aware that studying Chinese history is a matter of vital importance in order to build their own IRT (Hui, 2005).

Although there are some anxious voices that the nationalization of IRT would not be beneficial for the development of IRT toward a real ‘global discipline’ (Lu, 2010; Chen, 2011), it is thought that the development of the non-West world’s thoughts on international politics and world order is necessary at this stage, because it enables us to relativize the dominate position of Western thought on IRT and to realize a plural development of IRT studies. In order for IR to evolve towards a more diverse and inclusive discipline, discovering different thoughts and images on/of the world is important as well as examining the Anglo-American centrism in

international relations (Cunningham-Cross, 2011). In this context the sinicization of IRT, including the debate on a ‘Chinese school’, would be regarded as a source to relativize the dominant ‘truths’ in IR based upon a set of western-centric cultural practices, and to re-image the world. In a nutshell, the knowledge production based on Chinese culture and history is helpful in creating the diversity of thoughts on human society and synthesis and innovation of IRT.

On the other hand, as Kawashima Shin (2014, pp. 100-114) points out that in the process of constructing ‘Chinese theory’ or a ‘Chinese school’, especially (re)interpreting Chinese traditional thought, like ‘Tianxia system’ and ‘Tribute system’, Chinese scholars should be more conscious of the presence of other East Asian counties and hold a talk with their scholars. Most East Asian countries were members of ‘Tianxia system’ and ‘Tribute system’ in the past, and are influenced strongly by China’s rise at present. Building a new regional order in East Asia and constructing a new regional identity based on regional historical recourses and dialogues of knowledge with East Asian/Asian countries may be the most urgent problem for Chinese scholars.

As mentioned above, the self-awareness as a superpower of Chinese scholars is another motivating force for seeking a ‘China school’. So, fundamentally seeking a ‘Chinese school’ means that rising China as a global great power is seeking a new world order image, reconstructing its identity and searching for its new role in the world. Indeed, as an important movement, ‘rethinking China’ and ‘reconstructing China’ has developed since the 1990s.

For many Chinese scholars the financial crisis of 2008 means the complete disruption of

Western modernity, the beginning of a 'post-West' age. And such recognition has strengthened the arguments that insisted the legitimacy of sinicization and Chinese characteristics. On the other hand, some scholars contended that if China wants to play more of a role in global governance; China, who is in the changing age of value systems, must reconstruct the values that could be shared with the world (Pang, 2006, pp. 7-13; Xu, 2010).

The body of China is in the modern age, but its head is in the 'post-West' age. China has to promote its modernization including nation-building in the world where developed countries exist, and at the same time, it has to seek a way to overcome the defects of Western modernity including the nation state. This may be the historical context that we understand the 'sinicization' and 'China model' (Zheng, 2010).

It is evident that the sinicization of thoughts and knowledge will go on in China. From the resumption of Confucius Festival to the appearance of traditional values in 'the core values of socialism', the Chinese Communist Party has become aware that traditional thoughts are becoming more and more important. In September 2014, Xi Jinping, the president of China, made the first speech on the international symposium to mark the 2,565th anniversary of the birth of Confucius. He declared that China regards its traditional thought and culture as 'the soul of nation' and will inherit and develop them (*People's Daily*, September 25, 2014).

Rising China has been regaining its normal role of playing one of the major parts in the world. At the same time, China is facing many crucial problems. If China does not want to be on the way to collapse along with the world in which the modern West has been taking the lead, and wants

to address the challenges produced in the process of so-called modernization, it must rethink the world and itself. That is only the beginning.

If Western type of modernity, including technology, capitalism, and democracy, has a vital defect, then it would be helpful for the world to learn from the other civilizations especially East Asia/China, which had an experience in realizing a 'universal state', and keeping long-time peace in its history as Toynbee(1972) pointed out. The world may hereafter, if not now, be in an age of competition of modernities (Jacques, 2009). China, which is seeking its new identity, is on the same course as the world, which in turn, is seeking new international politics thoughts for a global age. The arguments about a post-West age, and the attention to Chinese world order ideas in the world perhaps implies that the normative power is shifting from the West to China and non-Western region (Callahan and Barabantseva, 2011).

'Theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space (Cox, 1981, p. 128).' The task for us is how to understand and interpret China's position in social and political time and space, including its ontological and epistemological foundations.

Footnote*

¹ The original version of this paper was published in *Aziya Kenkyu* (Asian Studies) in April 2012 (Vol. 58, Nos. 1 & 2, pp.51-68).

² A researcher of the ICCS of Aichi University.

³ *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, which published two special issues, vol. 7 (2007) and vol. 11 (2011), is noteworthy.

⁴ On the history of IR study in China see Chan (1997, pp. 40-64), Wang and Yuan (2006), Wang and Dan (2008), Shambaugh (2011, pp. 339-372).

⁵ See Lu, Y. (1984, p. 15); Wang, Lin and Zhao, (1986, pp. 1-7); Wang, S. (1987, pp. 1-14). And Song (2001, pp. 61-74) is a helpful literature to understand the debate on 'an IR theory with Chinese characteristics'.

⁶ In 2004, two symposiums were held, many famous Chinese scholars attended both of them. One was organized by *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu (Teach and Research)* and Renmin University in April, on the products see 'Zhongguo heping jueqi de guoji huanjing yu guoji celve' ('the international surroundings and international strategy of China's peaceful rise'), *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu (Teach and Research)*, 2004, 4. The other was organized by *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue (Social Sciences in China)* and *Guoji Shehui Kexue (International Social Sciences)* in May, on the products see "'Daguo jueqi yu Zhongguo de xuanze" Bitan' ('A conversation by means of writing on "China's peaceful rise"'), *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue (Social Sciences in China)*, 2004, 5, 51-63(+205-206).

⁷ See Fang (2001, pp. 18-23), Ren (2003, pp. 70-71(+80)). And, *European studies* published 10 articles on English School including special numbers (No.4, 2004; No.1, No.4, 2005). And, Chinese version of the representative works of the English School, including M. Wight, H. Bull, were published from 2003 to 2004.

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